

Dark Comfort

A Reason why people participate in terror or join cults.



The following texts mentions murder, cults, mass shootings, terrorism, depression and head injuries. If you do not wish to read about such topics, feel free to read something else.

I'd also like to say, I do not promote cults, terror and murder.

Thanks

Like many people, when I hear stories about cults and mass shootings. I keep wondering why? Why do people do such things? In my mind I stumbled upon a reason that is not often discussed: Comfort. Joining a cult, or doing a mass shooting is extremely predictable, it's fleeing from the complexity of modern life. We see these acts as chaos, but for those that do it, it's an act of order, a desperate scream for order in an unpredictable world.

For example: Someone who does a school shooting takes their own fate and that of others in their own hands. The objective is simple: "Killing as many people as possible". The final step is often suicide or suicide by cop. (Often the suicide by cop fails.)

This is of course terrible. But in the perpetrators eyes it is a clear plan with a definitive ending. Most people's lives are chaotic. They are not sure if they can keep their jobs, their spouse might divorce them, they have no idea what to do on a free Sunday, etc.... They do not know what life will be like in 5, 10 years. They don't even know if they will live in a retirement home when they are old or when and how they will die. Someone whom plans to commit a mass shooting knows when they will die and the way it will happen.

Mass shooters often believe in conspiracies or in a "them versus us" narrative. If anything it is "them alone, versus the world". A world full of complexity, bad and good actors, misled people and thousands of different motivations, groups and cultures are boiled into a binary simple world-vision: "Me versus Evil" or "My Group versus Evil". Mass shooters and terrorists might see themselves as evil, but probably a "necessary" evil. What they do is an "act of revenge" or "shaking the world awake."

This dark comfort, this fleeing from complexity, is also seen in people joining cults. They don't have to listen to themselves any more. No more doubts, no more planning, all they have to do is listen to their leader and do what the leader says!

Of course we cannot ignore the other reasons why people join cults or do acts of terror. They might be lonely, they might have been abused, they might have one or more mental illnesses, maybe they had a head injury, or have a brain tumour. Then there is the media reporting. When someone commits an act of terror this person gets broadcasted on television all the time. Because people want to understand such a bizarre act, or perhaps need a villain. The perpetrator becomes infamous (which is a form of famous). On the news their body count gets listed with those of other shooters as if its some sort of high-score in a video game.

In this world we must foster connection and love (or at least affection). Foster a tranquil world where individuals and groups can flourish. Where those that need help, get the help they need. Besides enforcing laws, and law enforcement keeping an eye on certain groups, online and real life, we also need to think about the reasons why people do certain things. We can do this without agreeing with those reasons.

At least alternative acts and or solutions can be found, besides joining a cult or doing an act of terror. People must be educated about cults and how they operate and reel people in. Most cult members, if not all of them, do not know they are inside a cult. People must be educated about the potential dangers of false conspiracy theories and dark internet rabbit-holes like the incel movement.

In short: terror or joining cults means predictability for the perpetrators. For them its order and simple and maybe even easy. They have a simple world view as an escape from a complex world. By thinking about evil phenomena like these we can prevent them.

Thank you for reading.
- Emilia Sameyn 25/06/2023